

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 01115 191001Z

14

ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 FRB-03

INR-07 NSAE-00 USIA-06 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 SP-02

CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 NSC-05 SS-15 STR-04

CEA-01 AGR-05 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 L-03 PA-01 PRS-01

SAM-01 FEA-01 /093 W

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R 190929Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6952

INFO AMCONGEN HONG KONG

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BANGKOK 1115

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD, CB, TH

SUBJECT: THAI-CAMBODIAN BORDER TRADE

SUMMARY: THOUGH THAILAND HAS REPORTEDLY CONCLUDED ITS SHIP-
MENT OF SALT TO CAMBODIA, MANY THAI MERCHANTS AWAIT SETTLEMENT
OF PAST CAMBODIAN DEBTS, AND PETROLEUM SMUGGLING CONTINUES.
END SUMMARY.

1. DAVID ANDELMAN OF NEW YORK TIMES TELLS US HE SPENT PRO-
DUCTIVE DAY TALKING TO CAMBODIAN REFUGEES RECENTLY ARRIVED IN
THAILAND AND OTHERS IN ARANYAPRATHET JANUARY 18, ON BASIS OF
WHICH HE EXPECTS TO FILE SEVERAL STORIES. BASED ON CONVERSATIONS
WITH THAI CUSTOMS OFFICIAL, BUSINESSMEN ENGAGED IN SMUGGLING,
AND REFUGEES, ANDELMAN RECEIVED A GOOD UPDATE ON THE CURRENT
STATE OF TRADE BETWEEN CAMBODIA AND THAILAND AT THAT BORDER
POINT.

2. A SIXTY-CAR TRAIN MOVED FROM ARANYAPRATHET INTO POIPET JANU-
ARY 18 CARRYING WHAT ANDELMAN WAS TOLD WAS THE LAST INSTALLMENT
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PAGE 02 BANGKO 01115 191001Z

OF THE 20,000 TONS OF SALT THAILAND AGREED TO SUPPLY CAMBODIA.

THE CUSTOMS OFFICIAL TOLD HIM THAT, DESPITE SOME REPORTS TO THE CONTRARY, THE CAMBODIANS HAVE SENT NEITHER DRIED FISH NOR TIMBER NOR ANYTING ELSE TO FULFILL THEIR PORTION OF THE BARTER DEAL. THE OFFICIAL COMMENTED THAT HE DOUBTED THAT KC HAVE EVEN BEGUN FELLING THE TREES. HE SAID HE THOUGHT THE SALT WAS TO HAVE BEEN USED FOR THE DRIED FISH WHICH SO FAR HAVE FAILED TO APPEAR.

3. ANDELMAN REPORTED THAT A LARGE GROUP OF MERCHANTS GATHERS AT THE BORDER DAILY IN HOPES OF COLLECTING SOME OF THE DEBT, NOW UP TO 18 MILLION BAHT (\$900,000), OWED THEM FOR GOODS SMUGGLED ON CREDIT INTO CAMBODIA IN THE PAST. FROM TIME TO TIME CAMBODIAN AUTHORITIES SATISFY SOME OF THE MERCHANTS BY PAYING THEM IN CRISP, NEW US\$100 BILLS, BUT THE REPAYMENT PROCESS IS A SLOW ONE.

4. DESPITE THE MERCHANT'S FRUSTRATIONS, SMUGGLING STILL CONTINUES ACROSS THE BORDER INTO CAMBODIA. BUSINESSMEN TOLD ANDELMAN THAT THE TRADE, IN PETROLEUM, TAKES PLACE AT NIGHT. THE KC ARE PAYING MORE THAN SIX TIMES THE NORMAL THAI PRICE AND, AT THE INSISTENCE OF THE SELLERS, ARE PAYING CASH FOR EACH FIVE-KILOGRAM PLASTICBAG OR CAN DELIVERED. COMMENT: THE KC WERE PREVIOUSLY PURCHASING PETROLEUM AT A MARK-UP OF 2 1/2 - 3 TIMES. IF THEY ARE NOW ACQUIRING IT AT A MARK-UP MORE THAN DOUBLE THAT AMOUNT, AS ANDELMAN CLAIMED, THEY MUST NEED IT VERY BADLY.

MASTERS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SMUGGLING, BORDER TRADE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BANGKO01115
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760019-0674
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760145/aaaabodz.tel
Line Count: 88
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EB
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <25 MAY 2004 by buchant0>; APPROVED <27 MAY 2004 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THAI-CAMBODIAN BORDER TRADE SUMMARY: THOUGH THAILAND HAS REPORTEDLY CONCLUDED ITS SHIP-
TAGS: ETRD, CB, TH
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006